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AMVETS National Legislative Director

March 10, 2004

The Honorable Chet Edwards
The House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Edwards:

It is our understanding that you and other members of the House Budget Committee plan to offer an amendment during the Committee's markup of the FY 2005 Budget Resolution that would substantially increase funds available for the programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, specifically for VA health care.

AMVETS (American Veterans), a congressionally chartered veterans service organization whose members provide support for veterans and the active military and serve an array of community services that enhance the quality of life for this nation's citizens, strongly supports your efforts to adequately fund veterans health care.

The need for increased investment in veterans' health care is well documented. The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that tens-of-thousands veterans wait six months and longer simply to see a doctor. Too many others are banned from enrollment because of a lack of resources and rationed care is standard practice. In May 2003, the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans reported chronic under-funding that left VA unable to meet its obligations to veterans. The entire situation is intolerable and is certainly no way for Congress to express our nation's gratitude for the sacrifice and service of its military veterans.

AMVETS strongly urges members of the Committee to support your proposal and lift spending for FY 2005 to the bipartisan level recommended by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. This level of funding is essential and without it those services sick and disabled veterans earned and deserve will not be there when they need them.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Jones
National Legislative Director